

NAVAL DEPOT AND ARMORY.

MEMORIAL

OF

CITIZENS OF NATCHEZ AND ADAMS COUNTY, MISS.,

ASKING

The location of the contemplated naval depot and armory at that place.

FEBRUARY 15, 1844.

Read, and referred to the Committee on Naval Affairs.

CITY HALL, NATCHEZ, *January 2, 1844.*

At a meeting of the committee, appointed at a general meeting of the citizens of Natchez and Adams county, to draught a memorial to Congress, soliciting the location of the contemplated naval depot and armory at this place, John R. Stockman, esq., in the chair; Thomas S. Munce, secretary—

Colonel James C. Wilkins, from the sub-committee appointed at a previous meeting of the committee, made a report, as follows:

"The committee appointed at a former meeting to prepare a memorial to Congress, in pursuance of the duty assigned them, respectfully submit the following brief summary of facts and reasons why the city of Natchez should be selected for the site of the contemplated naval depot and armory.

"Natchez, situated on the Mississippi river, about three hundred and ninety miles above its conflux with the ocean, is at the head of ship navigation during that portion of the year when the river is low, and yet is accessible, at all times, to vessels of any draught that can enter the mouth of the river. It is now, and has been for many years, visited at the lowest stages of water by ships of fifteen feet draught. It is believed that the channel at no place between this and New Orleans, presents less than fifteen feet depth of water at its lowest stages. To this point there are no serious obstacles to free and safe navigation. Below this, snags, sawyers, and sand-bars, so formidable and dangerous further up the river, are scarcely to be met with, and easily avoided. From our own observation, and the testimony of the oldest and most skillful navigators of the river, we can say, with confidence, that no vessel passing the Balize will meet with any serious obstacle in reaching this point.

"The harbor of Natchez and the landing, for the space of a mile in front of the bluffs on which the city is built, are not surpassed by any on the Mississippi river in depth of water, good anchorage, or the permanency and security of its banks. The width of the river, opposite the city, is about

six hundred yards, and the average depth of water about fifty feet. And for more satisfactory information on this subject, we take great pleasure in referring to a detailed statement of the soundings and measurements of the Mississippi river at this point, made by Colonel Shaw, Professor Forshey, and R. Lawrence, esq., of Vidalia, Louisiana, in August, 1841, which has been kindly furnished the committee by one of those gentlemen, and which statement we submit hereunto as a part of this memorial. (See document A, annexed.)

"In the selection of a naval depot, the facility of procuring an abundance of good material for ship-building and repairs must constitute an important inducement. It is believed that no point on the river, accessible to ships, presents more advantages in this particular. White oak, red cypress, and black locust, abound in the immediate vicinity; cedar, floated down in rafts from the various tributaries of the Mississippi, can be procured in any quantity; and forests of stately pines, covering millions of acres, valuable not only for timber, but for the pitch and turpentine, approach within a few miles of this point, and are rendered more accessible by a railway already constructed thirty miles into the interior; coal, iron, lead, and hemp, and all articles of ship-chandlery, can be procured with facility.

"The position of Natchez, as a military point, is too well known to require particular description. From the bluffs, on which the principal portion of the town is situated, the passage of the river may be effectually commanded. It was selected by the military genius and discerning eye of the first French and Spanish invaders of the country, and continued more than a century the principal military depot on the river Mississippi. Under the names of Forts Rosalia and Pannure, it has become celebrated in history and romance. Although the power of this young yet mighty nation has shed the blessings of peace and safety beyond the waters of the Mississippi, yet, should a war ever take place with a European power or with Mexico, it is easy to perceive that the shores of the Gulf of Mexico in the one case, and the southwestern frontier in the other, would become the theatre of active operations, naval or military. In such case, no point combining entire safety with convenience for naval and military enterprises, and distribution of arms, supplies, and munitions of war, could be selected so suitable.

"A glance at the map will show that the southwestern frontier of our country is within one hundred and eighty miles of Natchez. Red river, which washes our frontier in its course for a great distance, and which, with its tributaries, embraces the largest fertile portion of the eminently fertile State of Louisiana, debouches into the Mississippi about sixty miles below this point. This stream, navigable for steamboats during the greater part of the year, affords the best and most commodious means of transporting to our frontier troops, arms, supplies, and munitions of war; and from no other point could they be transported with equal expedition and cheapness as from a depot at Natchez.

"In the selection of a site for a naval depot and armory, the salubrity of the situation must and ought to have great weight. In this respect, it is believed that Natchez is unsurpassed by any other point on the Mississippi river south of the mouth of the Ohio. Its high and healthy location is very generally known and appreciated; and the very able, full, and satisfactory report of the enlightened medical faculty of this city (founded upon facts and data in which there can be no mistake) to the meeting, and which will accompany this memorial, (see document B, annexed,) makes it an act

of supererogation to do more, in this place, than to direct attention to this important view of the subject.

"In conclusion, we cannot refrain from urging respectfully, but earnestly, the further consideration, that no State in the Union, of the same extent of population, and which has been a member of that Union for as great a period of time, has asked less of the Federal Government, in the expenditure of the finances, than the State of Mississippi.

"We, therefore, respectfully pray that Congress will take this memorial into their consideration most seriously, have the necessary investigations made upon this subject, and that said naval depot and armory may be established in Natchez or its vicinity.

"NATCHEZ, January 2, 1844."

On motion of Captain John B. Nevitt, the report was received and agreed to.

John T. McMurran, esq., in behalf of the sub committee, introduced the following resolution, which was adopted :

Resolved, That the report of the committee in favor of the establishment of a naval depot and armory at Natchez, with the accompanying statement of Messrs. Shaw, Forshey, and Lawrence, and with the report of the medical faculty of the city, be engrossed by the secretary, and adopted as the memorial of the citizens of Natchez and Adams county to the Congress of the United States, for the establishment of said armory and depot at Natchez.

JOHN R. STOCKMAN,

Chairman of the committee.

THOS. S. MUNCE, *Secretary.*

E. Profilet	} <i>Selection of the city of Natchez.</i>
P. G. Cregier	
Robert Stewart	
C. Marsh	
Thomas Rose	
Geo. I. Dicks	
Patterson, <i>Officer</i>	
John J. Chanche	
Ch. A. Lacoste	
Fras. B. E. Browne, M. D.	
Charles Greaves	
William Yandle	
John Price	
James Brown	
W. N. Calmes	
Wm. McAlister	
E. L. Glassburn	
Robt. Walker	
J. T. McMurran	
Woodson Wren, P. M.	
Phineas Massey	
James R. Kane	
Isaiah Gale	
Mark Breeden	

Sam. T. McAlister
L. M. Patterson
A. L. Dubuisson
Sam. P. Gossin
George Weldon
D. P. Page
Sam. Scott
Thomas Fletcher
Thos. Elward
R. Parker
H. Patterson
John Ingham
Peter Kelly
Erastus Sherman, jr.
L. Latham
Andrew Brown, jr.
C. Theodore Vereingerholz
A. J. Postlethwaite
W. J. Key
Geo. W. Koontz
A. C. Britton
G. B. Chandler
Thos. Crouch
Noah Barlow

W. H. Fox
 James J. Barr
 S. Waters
 Charles Dickerman
 William Dickerman
 John McDonnell
 G. S. Taintor
 James Powers
 Wm. Forshey
 W. B. Young
 A. D. Rawlings
 D. C. Dunlap
 R. W. Lofftuis
 Jacob Cross
 E. R. Price
 Richard Elward
 Edward P. Elder
 W. N. Whitehurst
 Samuel R. Hammitt
 Wm. St. John Elliot
 Wm. B. Forman
 L. Pitcher
 Elijah Peale
 Philip A. Schuyler
 Benj. Chase
 Brevoort Butler
 T. A. Holmes
 Thos. Marshall
 Sam. Gustin
 Robt. M. Enthougl
 Zenas Preston
 H. Gridley
 J. G. Taylor
 J. H. Bush
 J. R. Dicks
 J. W. Bunce
 C. B. Fuller
 Thos. Henderson
 S. D. Eliot
 H. L. Bingaman
 H. Emerson
 W. B. Bradish
 A. Breckner
 J. Railey
 O. V. Bemiss
 James Walsh
 Isaac Dunbar
 E. C. Payne
 John B. Nevitt
 W. S. Morgan
 W. B. Howell
 R. W. Wood

William Dale
 John Holder
 Thos. Barnard
 Bro. Woods
 John M. Baldwin
 John Royce
 Hugh McFadden
 Thos. McConell
 John Eiseley
 C. M. Benbrook
 Thomas Hunnicutt
 Samuel G. Risk
 Robert Read
 H. Bond
 John Hogue
 W. H. Forbes
 B. F. Gray
 Charles Goureneaux
 Peter G. Baker
 John A. Hunstable
 Flavius Fletcher
 J. S. Mathewson
 D. L. Rivers
 Thos. W. Clay
 J. W. Midderhoff
 H. S. Holton
 John J. Coulson
 Wm. H. Little
 Andrew Brown
 P. H. McGraw
 J. F. Brasier
 William Ballentine
 John Lacroze
 H. K. Hatton
 John Kennedy
 P. Besançon, jr.
 R. M. Ayres
 W. M. Lapsley
 W. E. Turner
 Abm. Cooper
 R. S. Crary
 Robt. Patterson
 J. H. Macmichael
 J. W. N. Prescott
 S. B. Newman
 James Canadine
 Wm. K. Day
 Wm. B. Newman
 A. P. Stirling
 P. Leahy
 John Liddell
 Silas Stockwell

L. D. Aldrich
 Wm. Mellen
 Thos. J. Arlette
 J. A. Bradley
 A. M. Griffin
 L. Julienne
 Jacob Loria
 Wm. W. W. Wood
 G. W. Thrift
 Geo. W. Evans
 Thos. Weldon

A. Esdra
 A. G. Carpenter
 M. Kicheling
 G. W. Lancaster
 John Chandler
 Bernard Body
 W. Cassedy
 Lin. G. Harrison
 Joseph Combst
 Morton Taintor
 Richard Elward.

A.

In August, 1841, Messrs. Forshey, Lawrence, and I, made some soundings, measurements, &c., of the Mississippi river at this place, the result of which is herewith communicated.

Commencing at a point about one mile below the Natchez landing, on the western shore of the river—

At about 20 yards from the shore the depth was 30 feet.

" 90	"	"	"	60	"
" 175	"	"	"	62	"
" 260	"	"	"	66	"
" 320	"	"	"	68	"
" 390	"	"	"	60	"
" 475	"	"	"	63	"
" 535	"	"	"	62	"
" 555	"	"	"	55	"
" 580	"	"	"	50	"
" 590	"	"	"	12	"

True distance from shore to shore, by measurement, 596 yards.

Two thirds of a mile above the first soundings, from a point at the upper ravine below Natchez, directly across the river—

About 25 yards from the eastern shore, depth 6 feet.

" 35	"	"	"	36	"
" 120	"	"	"	76	"
" 150	"	"	"	84	"
" 240	"	"	"	92	"
" 290	"	"	"	68	"
" 370	"	"	"	62	"
" 470	"	"	"	50	"
" 540	"	"	"	30	"
" 560	"	"	"	12	"

Breadth, by measurement, 570 yards.

At one mile and a half up the river, from the sand-bar opposite the cotton-press, above Natchez—

About 30 yards from the western shore, depth 6 feet.

" 60	"	"	"	8	"
" 90	"	"	"	18	"
" 120	"	"	"	28	"

About 130 yards from the western shore, depth	60 feet.
" 140 "	60 "
" 150 "	150 "
" 170 "	72 "
" 250 "	75 "
" 300 "	78 "
" 370 "	81 "
" 410 "	84 "
" 430 "	56 "
" 460 "	46 "
" 475 "	60 "
" 480 "	30 "

Breadth, as conjectured, 490 yards.

At one hundred yards below we found, on sounding—

At 140 yards from western shore, 50 feet.

" 170 " " 60 "

From the last line of soundings we fell down with the current three or four hundred yards, to examine a large "boiling," or "boil," of about three acres extent; 50 yards from the eastern shore, at the upper edge of the "boil," found 12 feet depth; 20 yards lower down, 8 feet depth; one hundred yards lower down, 48 feet depth. About one hundred yards lower down is another great "boil," at 100 yards from the eastern shore 66 feet depth.

Continuing down the river, off Sisloff's saw-mill, in the middle of the river, we sounded and found - - - 70 feet.

Off the light-house - - - 73 "

120 yards from eastern shore, off flag-staff - - - 65 "

120 yards from eastern shore, off Levee street - - - 75 "

80 yards from eastern shore, off Wattle's store - - - 63 "

50 yards from eastern shore, off Cregier's store - - - 59 "

From the ferry wharf three soundings were made; at intervals of one hundred yards in the middle of the river, found 63 feet, 72 feet, and 60 feet.

The river was, at the time of sounding, thirty eight feet and a half below the high-water mark of 1841.

If the above can be of any service, I shall be gratified. I can vouch for the accuracy of the soundings and measurements, except the conjectured breadth of the river from the sand-bar to the cotton-press.

(Signed) SHAW.

VIDALIA, LOUISIANA, December 26, 1843.

In the above measurements I assisted, and shall be happy if these observations, or any that my examinations of the geological stratifications of our bluffs, can render you service.

(Signed)

CALEB G. FORSHEY,
Civil Engineer.

To the GENERAL COMMITTEE

from the citizens of Natchez on a memorial to Congress
for the location of the naval depot and armory.

B.

The medical faculty, to whom the late public meeting of the citizens of Natchez and Adams county referred the question of the health of this city as a suitable site for a naval depot and armory, beg leave to report :

That, in regard to health, it would be difficult to find a more salubrious site anywhere on the Mississippi river than that of Natchez.

The question of health does not depend for its solution on mere opinion or vague conjecture, but can be demonstrated with certainty by unquestionable facts. For twenty years past, all the deaths in Natchez have been accurately registered. The mortality during a long series of years being known, and the population known, the comparative health of different localities can be ascertained with mathematical precision. From the last of December, 1823, to the last of December, 1833, embracing a period of ten years, and including two epidemic fevers and epidemic cholera, the annual average mortality, including the deaths from epidemics, was only one in 30.6; deducting the deaths among the non-resident population, not included in the census, the annual mortality among the citizens of Natchez has ranged from 1 in 30, to 1 in 61, for ten years in succession.

In Philadelphia, during nearly the same period, from 1820 to 1833, [see Emerson's Medical Statistics,] the mortality has ranged from 1 in 29 to 1 in 42: Philadelphia is healthier than New York or Boston. In all these cities, fully one fortieth part of the population die annually. The mortality is always greater than two per cent. in all our Atlantic cities; while, for ten years in succession, it has been less than two per cent. in Natchez. In France, according to statistical data, procured with great accuracy under the orders of Napoleon, for the special purpose of ascertaining the annual average mortality, it was found that, among more than two millions of people accurately enumerated, one-thirtieth part of the whole annually perished by the diseases incident to humanity. Since the 31st December, 1833, to the present period, (ten years,) the annual average mortality has been nearly one-fourth greater than the preceding ten years. This increase in the mortality of Natchez is mainly to be attributed to that improvident legislation which abolished the laws that, previously to 1834, had regulated the practice of medicine in Mississippi. The increase, therefore, of the annual average mortality in Natchez the last ten years, compared with the preceding period of ten years, should not be drawn in argument against the salubrity of the place as a proper locality for a naval depot and armory. The occurrence of epidemics has not been more frequent during the last period of ten years, than they were the preceding period; nor have they been different in their type and character, or less obedient to the appropriate remedies. No objection can, therefore, lie against Natchez as the site of the proposed naval depot and armory on the score of health; on the contrary, as few or no localities on the Mississippi river are equally healthy, and many much less so, there seems to be no good reason why Natchez should be passed by, to look for a healthier situation beyond the shallow sand-bars higher up the river, which obstruct the channel and intercept the navigation, a good part of every year, for large vessels. The idea that a healthier locality than Natchez can be found by ascending the river, short of the waters of the upper Mississippi, beyond the Ohio, is evidently an impracticable abstraction. The site in the vicinity of Natchez, which nature appears to have indicated as the most suitable for such an establishment as

a naval depot and armory, has been proved, by repeated experience, to be beyond the reach and influence of every epidemic which has heretofore prevailed in the city. Whatever difference of opinion there may be, in regard to the nature and cause of the disease called yellow fever, every one is agreed, who has any knowledge of the history of the disease at all, that it never spreads into the country. This law of the disease is as immutable in the West Indies as it is in the United States. Of the many epidemic yellow fevers of Philadelphia, no case ever originated at the hospital at Bush Hill. The exceptions, if any, to the above law, are so few, that they prove the general rule. Consequently, the public servants engaged at the naval depot and armory, if located in the vicinity of Natchez, would be beyond the influence of any epidemic of the kind which might prevail in the city. Few persons seem to be conscious of the fact disclosed by statistical medicine several years ago, and published in the medical journals, that, notwithstanding the epidemic fevers and other diseases incident to southern latitudes, the annual average mortality among the citizens of Natchez is less than the annual average mortality in many of our Atlantic cities, and less than the average mortality in most of the large cities of Europe. All of which is respectfully submitted, and the data on which the statistical calculations are made are open to examination.

SAM. A. CARTWRIGHT, M. D.

WM. L. JONES, M. D.

J. F. COCHRAN, M. D.

D. G. BENBROOK, M. D.

JAMES YOUNG, M. D.

H. NELSON LLOYD, M. D.

F. CHAPPELLIER, M. D.

December 29, 1843.

Schedule of the statistical data on which the report of the physicians, in regard to the health of the city of Natchez, is founded.

Date.	Deaths among citizens.	Deaths among strangers.	Total deaths.	Rate of mortality among citizens.	Total rate of mortality.
1824, population 2,530 - -	65	35	100	1 in 35	1 in 22
1825, epidemic yellow fever - -	84	64	148	1 in 30	1 in 16
1826 - - - -	63	22	85	1 in 40	1 in 30
1827 - - - -	63	24	87	1 in 40	1 in 29
1828 - - - -	41	33	74	1 in 61	1 in 33
1829, population 2,789, epidemic yellow fever - -	72	31	103	1 in 38	1 in 27
1830 - - - -	56	24	80	1 in 49	1 in 34
1831 - - - -	45	31	76	1 in 61	1 in 36
1832 - - - -	45	30	75	1 in 61	1 in 37
1833, Asiatic cholera - -	88	62	150	1 in 40	1 in 22
1834, population 4,520 - -	177	88	265	1 in 25	1 in 16
1835 - - - -	154	79	233	1 in 29	1 in 19
1836, population 5,500 - -	156	70	226	1 in 34	1 in 24
1837, population 6,160, yellow fever - -	314	147	461	1 in 20	1 in 11
1838, population 5,000 - -	100	71	171	1 in 50	1 in 29
1839, yellow fever - -	200	182	382	1 in 25	1 in 13
1840, population 4,800 - -	142	80	222	1 in 33	1 in 21
1841 - - - -	98	33	131	1 in 49	1 in 36
1842 - - - -	98	33	131	1 in 49	1 in 36
1843 - - - -	104	42	146	1 in 46	1 in 32

N. B. The proportion of deaths among citizens and strangers is made out by the nearest approximate that could be made; if not strictly correct, it approaches so nearly to it as not materially to vary the result.

An approximate to the population is also made in those years when we had no census taken.

